

Sarapion of Thmuis and Baptismal Practice in Early Christian Egypt: The Need for a Judicious Reassessment

The 1980 article by Geoffrey Cuming entitled "Thmuis Revisited: Another Look at the Prayers of Bishop Sarapion" remains something of a watershed in studies on the collection of prayers in the eleventh-century Greek manuscript, MS Lavra 149, which are attributed to Sarapion of Thmuis.¹ Cuming observed that the cumulative work of F. E. Brightman, Bernard Capelle, and Bernard Botte had created a picture of Sarapion as respectively muddle-headed, avant-garde, and heretical.² Brightman had regarded the contents of the collection as not having been arranged in any proper order. Capelle singled out the Logos epiklesis in the anaphora and blessing of the baptismal water as a theological innovation. Botte detected Arianism, and since Sarapion had been a friend of Anthony and Athanasius, this suggested that the work was redacted by a "Pseudo-Sarapion," who was either an Arian, or a Pneumatomachian, in the fifth century. Cuming's article sought to restore some basic common sense and logic to the subject matter. If the copyist had made the mistake of beginning the second half of a codex before the first half, then the prayer sequence makes good sense without rearrangement to fit a preconceived "more logical" order. Furthermore, Cuming gave some quotations from the letters of Athanasius where Logos and Spirit are closely equated, and thus the Logos epiklesis is entirely consistent with Athanasian theology. Finally he suggested that the frequent confusion of *agennetos* (unbegotten) with *agenetos* (uncreated) by a

Bryan Spinks, an Anglican Priest, is a professor of liturgical studies at Yale University.

¹ *Theological Studies* 41 (1980) 568–75.

² Cuming was referring to F. E. Brightman, "The Sacramentary of Sarapion," *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1900) 88–113, 247–77; B. Capelle, "L'Anaphore de Serapion: Essai d'exegese," *Le Museon* 59 (1946) 425–43; B. Botte, "L'Eucologe de Serapion est-il authentique?", *Oriens Christianus* 48 (1964) 50–57.

copyist could account for the apparent "Arianism"; since elsewhere in the prayers there is no subordination of the Son, the case against Sarapion could be dismissed. Cuming saw no reason why the prayers should not have been the collection of Sarapion, bishop of Thmuis 339–363 C.E. Cuming agreed with Brightman, however, that not all the prayers were from the same hand — it was indeed a *collection*. Prayers 15–17, the blessing of oils, for example, seemed to be distinguished from the rest. Differences in vocabulary suggested other strata.

It is from this sound basis established by Geoffrey Cuming that Maxwell Johnson has recently subjected the euchology to a minute literary, liturgical and theological analysis.³ With the help of a computer check, he agreed with Brightman and Cuming that prayers 15–17 represent a separate and independent stratum of the text. In the ordination prayers, 12–14, 13 seems to stand apart from the other two, but it does have a literary relationship with prayers 7–11. His overall conclusion is that we can identify four general strata: 1) Prayers 1–11, 13, 19, 21, 24–30; 2) Prayers 15–17, concerned with oil; 3) Prayers 12, 14 (Diaconal and Episcopal ordination), 20, 22 and 23; 4) Prayer 18 (burial).

The computer has thus confirmed what we would expect a collection to be — a compilation of useful prayers from more than one source.

In his subsequent assessment of the baptismal and related prayers in the euchology (prayers 7–11, and 15–16) Johnson compares them with the *Canons of Hippolytus*, the *Arabic Testamentum Domini*, and the Coptic baptismal rite. However, he also takes as proven the view of Georg Kretschmar and Paul Bradshaw concerning the earliest shape of the baptismal liturgy in Egypt.

³ Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 249, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Rome 1995. This is the published version of his Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame 1993. See also the summary and satellite articles: *Liturgy in Early Christian Egypt*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 33, Grove Books, Cambridge 1995; "A Fresh Look at the Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis," *Studia Liturgica* 22 (1992) 163–83; "The Archaic Nature of the Sanctus, Institution Narrative, Epiclesis of the Logos in the Anaphora Ascribed to Sarapion of Thmuis," in (ed.) R. Taft, *The Christian East*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 251 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale 1996) 671–702.

In a lengthy essay in 1963, Kretschmar suggested that references in Origen and Didymus the Blind indicated that as in East Syria, so in Egypt the early sequence was a single pre-baptismal anointing followed by baptism and the Eucharist.⁴ Thus Origen speaks of baptism "in the Holy Spirit and the water" and "the unction of chrism and the baptism have continued in you undefined."⁵ Didymus wrote that "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit were we both sealed and baptized."⁶ According to Kretschmar, these attest a pattern of pre-baptismal anointing and baptism. These references, together with later legendary material, were sufficient evidence for him of the early sequence which later gave way to a post-baptismal chrism in the fourth century. Bradshaw took this further in an essay entitled "Baptismal Practice in the Alexandrian Tradition: Eastern or Western?" in 1988.⁷ Here he presented Kretschmar's evidence for English readers, and developed the argument further, particularly with regard to a distinctive baptismal season in Egypt. He postulated that the early Egyptian practice consisted of a) a catechumenate of 40 days, with a single scrutiny and with no exorcism implied; b) a non-exorcistic anointing; c) a renunciation and syntaxis; d) baptism; e) Eucharist. It was from this premise that Johnson turned to the baptismal prayers in Sarapion.

On account of the close literary style and vocabulary between prayers 15–17, Johnson proposes that they are new additions to an earlier rite. Prayer 15 moves in the direction of an "exorcistic" interpretation, and prayer 16 is for a post-baptismal anointing with chrism. Not only do these prayers belong to a different stratum, they are a "later" stratum. Prayers 7–11 which are found in the first

⁴ Georg Kretschmar, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Liturgie, insbesondere der Tauf liturgie, in Ägypten," *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie*, Band 8 1963, Johannes Stauda, Verlag Kassel, 1964 1–54. I had drawn attention to and appealed to Kretschmar's thesis in my paper "The Jerusalem Liturgy of the *Catecheses Mystagogicae*: Syrian or Egyptian?" *Studia Patristica* 18 Part 2, 391–95. The paper was given at the 1983 Oxford Patristic Conference, but not published until 1989. It should be apparent that I am now less convinced that this was the sole pattern even if Kretschmar is correct.

⁵ *In Rom.* 5:8, PG 14.1038C and *In Lev.* 6:5, PG 12.472D.

⁶ *De Trin.* 2:15, PG 39.720A.

⁷ In (ed.) Paul F. Bradshaw, *Essays in Early Eastern Initiation*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study (Bramcote: Grove Books 1988) 5–17.

and largest stratum, together with prayers 21 and 28 which relate to the catechumenate, are interpreted as being "earlier" and as representing an earlier stage of the baptismal rite. Prayer 7, the blessing of the water, is regarded as "archaic" because of its Logos epiklesis, and because of its concern for new birth imagery rather than with a "later" Pauline death/burial imagery. With the sequence 7-11, the presence of a non-exorcistic, pre-baptismal anointing could be presumed because prayer 9 refers to the "seal of assent" and prayer 10 refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit. There is a prayer after the renunciation, which may have presumed a syntaxis as well as an apotaxis. In the "earlier" rite, this would be followed by the prayers after the baptism, and then the Eucharist. Johnson concludes that it is quite possible to assert that prayers 7-11 contain a complete baptismal ritual reflecting a relatively early baptismal theology centered on the Jordan event, and the Holy Spirit was referred to in a pre-baptismal context. Prayers 15 and 16 are a result of fourth-century developments and innovations.

In his survey of historical method, E. H. Carr commented that "the bias of the historian can be judged by the hypothesis which he adopts."⁸ Johnson's treatment of the baptismal prayers of Sarapion appears to rest on three hypotheses, each of which I find questionable.

THE EARLY EGYPTIAN PATTERN

Johnson has assumed that Kretschmar and Bradshaw have demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt that there was but one single early Egyptian pattern of baptism which had only a pre-baptismal anointing. One major problem acknowledged by all writers on this subject is the paucity of early liturgical evidence for Egypt. It may well be that Origen and Didymus, together with the later legendary material, do in fact witness to such a pattern, though the evidence adduced is far from unambiguous. Bradshaw notes that within the same context Origen refers to "visible waters and visible chrism" and then, "in the Holy Spirit and the water." Bradshaw does his best to explain away the reference to

⁸ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge, January-March 1961 (London: Macmillan & Co. 1961) 55.

"visible water and visible chrism," suggesting that Origen could be referring to Caesarean usage, and that in view of his next statement, it might not in fact be a reference to a post-baptismal anointing.⁹ This seems to be special pleading. It could just as well refer to post-baptismal chrism; or, more likely, it may mean that Origen was simply not really concerned with a consistent treatment with which liturgical scholars can reconstruct "earlier patterns." Yet even if some Egyptian fathers knew a pattern of pre-baptismal anointing and baptism, that does not allow us to draw the inference that it was the *only* pattern for baptism known in Egypt.

Elsewhere Bradshaw has exhorted scholars to beware precisely of assuming a simple monolinear development, and that the emerging picture is one of diversity of practices.¹⁰ One might add that this diversity need not be limited to between regions; different practices could well have existed within a region. Alastair Logan has recently argued that Gnostic groups and the Coptic *Didache* witness to a post-baptismal anointing with myron in Antioch which existed alongside a pattern of pre-baptismal anointing and baptism.¹¹ Logan's example of Gnostic usage is even more pertinent to Egypt. Wilfred Griggs, while correcting the wilder claims of W. Bauer that the early Egyptian Christians were all Gnostic, has demonstrated how Egyptian Christianity in the first two centuries can be characterized in its organization as consisting of autonomous groups throughout the country presided over by local presbyters rather than by the bishop of Alexandria.¹² Doctrinally these groups accepted a much broader scope of texts and

⁹Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p.15. Since the work cited on Romans was written before 244 C.E., the implication of Bradshaw's remark for his argument would be that Caesarea knew a pattern of baptism-chrism in the early third century, which would let Cyril of Jerusalem off the charge of being the one who invented that pattern!

¹⁰Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (London: SPCK 1992).

¹¹Alastair H. B. Logan, "Post-baptismal Chrismation in Syria: the Evidence of Ignatius, the *Didache* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, forthcoming in *Journal of Theological Studies*. See also his book, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1996).

¹²C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity. From its origins to 451 C.E.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1990). See also (eds.) Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring, *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1986).

traditions than was accepted in nascent Catholicism. It is also clear that Gnostics regarded themselves, and indeed were regarded by many others, as belonging within the fellowship of the church, often well into the late third century. Basilides and Valentinus were active in Alexandria at some point in the second century, as was Valentinus' pupil, Theodotus. The Nag Hammadi library is an obvious reminder of the literature and traditions which were collected. Thus the *Gospel of Philip*, even if originally Antiochene or Edessene in origin, was well known to some groups in Egypt in the third century. It witnesses to initiation with a stripping of clothes, descent into the font and the use of chrism after baptism: "Chrism has more authority than baptism. For because of chrism we are called christians, not because of baptism. . . . Whoever has been anointed has everything: resurrection, light, cross, holy spirit." (*Gospel of Philip*, 83)

There is also an allusion to putting on a garment of life, which may or may not be metaphorical.¹³ Segelberg pointed out that the *Gospel of Truth* also seems to know of baptism followed by chrismation, and Logan has argued that the myth of the five seals in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* refers to the post-baptismal anointing of the two eyes, two ears and mouth.¹⁴ The *Excerpta ex Theodoto* witness to exorcism and baptism, with the Pauline idea of death and resurrection.¹⁵ This may not have been the ritual pattern of the "Catholic" groups in Alexandria represented by Clement, but it was an Egyptian pattern. It is not being suggested that the Gnostic evidence provides us with the "true early pattern." It does, however, provide better attestation than anything adduced by Kretschmar and Bradshaw in support of their "early" pattern. All one would wish to say is that the Gnostic evidence testifies that pre-baptismal exorcism and post-baptismal myron appear to

¹³ See D. H. Tripp, "The 'Sacramental System' of the Gospel of Philip," *Studia Patristica* 17, Part one (1982), 251-60.

¹⁴ E. Segelberg, "The Baptismal Rite according to some of the Coptic-Gnostic Texts of Nag-Hammadi," *Studia Patristica* 5, Part three (1962), 117-28; Alastair H. B. Logan, "The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997) 188-206.

¹⁵ Elizabeth A. Leeper, "From Alexandria to Rome: The Valentinian Connection to the Incorporation of Exorcism as a Prebaptismal Rite," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990) 6-24. See also Segelberg, art.cit.

have been known to some Egyptian groups by the third century at the latest, and the evidence is strong. There may have been a pattern of pre-baptismal anointing and baptism, but that evidence is far from strong. If we are as generous as possible to the evidence of Kretschmar and Bradshaw, then the best we can do is to speak of a diversity of patterns. Thus the *Canons of Hippolytus*, where, for example, in comparison to *Apostolic Tradition*, a change has been made to a forty-day pre-baptismal period, and the prayer by the bishop has been altered, may be less of a fourth-century innovation as Bradshaw suggested, and more of a conscious adaptation to accommodate one local Egyptian diocesan usage.¹⁶ In the case of Sarapion, we cannot say what the earlier Thmuis pattern was, but it might have known a post-baptismal anointing with chrism from the third century or even before. We have no objective criteria for knowing one way or the other.

THE PRAYERS FOR OIL AS EXORCISTIC AND

POST-BAPTISMAL CHRISM AS LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Because of his acceptance of the single early Egyptian pattern, Johnson assumes that a pre-baptismal prayer for oil which is slightly exorcistic, and a post-baptismal prayer for chrism must be later, perhaps fourth-century developments. This seems to rest on another hypothesis concerning the early associations of oil which was put forward by Gabriele Winkler, and which has come to be regarded as established orthodoxy.¹⁷ According to Winkler, in Syria where the baptismal pattern was anointing-baptism-Eucharist, the oldest stratum had a single anointing of the head, which signified messianic kingly and priestly status through the descent of the Spirit. Later the anointing was extended to the body, with the result that the anointing took on a cathartic and apotropaic ritual. This conclusion necessitated Winkler assigning the various baptismal accounts in the *Acts of Thomas* to different periods of this evolution. Later, by the fourth century, the associations with the Spirit were shifted, first to water (John Chrysostom) and then to the "newly

¹⁶Bradshaw, in *Essays*, p.16. See also (ed.) Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Canons of Hippolytus*, Alcuin/Grow Liturgical Study 2 (Bramcote: Grove Books 1987).

¹⁷G.Winkler, "The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and its Implications," *Worship* 52 (1978) 24-45.

introduced" post-baptismal chrism at Jerusalem. This theory for Syria seems to have been transposed to fit any ritual where the early pattern is posited as anointing-baptism-Eucharist, and seems to underlie Johnson's judgment on prayers 15 and 16 in Sarapion.

There is no rule which says that what was the case in Syria was also the case in Egypt. But Winkler's hypothesis is rather arbitrary in assigning a linear development to the various accounts of baptism in the *Acts of Thomas* for no other reason than that her theory of the *Didascalia* having the oldest stratum, necessitates it. The *Didascalia* may well represent the attempt of one area bishop to impose a certain uniformity, but even if that is not the case, it tells us only of one group's understanding of the pre-baptismal anointing in one area in North Syria.¹⁸ There is no sound reason for arranging the accounts of baptism in the *Acts of Thomas* in some chronological order of development. A more natural reading is that they witness to a variety of practices.¹⁹ One could add here that, given the number of different ecclesial groupings in late fourth-century Antioch, it should not surprise us that the pattern of initiation in *Apostolic Constitutions* 7 knows a post-baptismal anointing whereas apparently Chrysostom did not. Ecclesial diversity is perhaps a better explanation than the rather strained argument which sees Chrysostom's rite as in swift transition.

It is within the pre-baptismal prayers over the oil in the *Acts of Thomas* that we find themes of healing, protection, and exorcism — for example in the baptism of Gundaphorus and Vizan.²⁰ Ephrem, writing in the fourth century, and knowing the pattern pre-baptismal anointing-baptism-Eucharist, in his Hymn on Virginity 7, uses a whole number of ideas associated with oil.²¹ Given its various associations, there is no rule apart from Winkler's invention which says that only one association of oil must be used in a prayer for it to be early, nor another which says several ideas

¹⁸ See C. Methuen, "Widows, Bishops and the Struggle for Authority in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995).

¹⁹ Winkler's theory is receiving critical attention in the dissertation of my doctoral student, Simon Jones. See also Ruth A. Myers, "The Structure of the Syrian Baptismal Rite," in Bradshaw, *Essays*, 31–43.

²⁰ See the texts in (ed.) Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1992).

²¹ *Ibid.*

juxtaposed must be the result of later transition. Winkler's theory may, therefore, be in need of considerable modification. Admittedly the themes in the *Acts of Thomas* are Syrian and not Egyptian, but it is possible to conclude that the use of the themes in the pre-baptismal anointing is attested in some places at least in the third century.

In the case of prayer 15 of Sarapion, it is worth looking at what the text says: "Master, lover of humanity and lover of souls, compassionate and merciful God of truth, we call upon you, being convinced by, and obeying the promises of your only-begotten who has said, 'if you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven.' And we anoint with this anointing oil those (men) approaching (or those women approaching) this divine regeneration, beseeching you that our Lord Christ Jesus may work a healing and strengthening power with it and reveal himself through this anointing oil, and eradicate from their soul, body and spirit, every indication of sin and transgression or satanic effect, and by his own grace grant them forgiveness, that dying to sin, they will live for righteousness and being refashioned through this anointing and being cleansed through the washing and being renewed by the Spirit they will be fully able to overcome, from now on, the attacks of the malevolent powers upon them and the deceits of this life, and so be bound and united with the flock of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ and be joint heirs of the promises with your saints. Because through him be to you the glory and the power in holy Spirit both now and to all the ages of ages. Amen."²²

This prayer asks for healing and strength-making power, and recreation. It is not exorcistic, but apotropaic, and its themes echo some of those of the Syrian prayers in the *Acts of Thomas*. Johnson suggests that the reference to dying to sin and living to righteousness may well indicate the influence of a later paschal rather than the Jordan and new birth baptismal interpretation. Apart from offering no definition of what is to be understood as early and late, he overlooks the fact that Origen, who elsewhere he appeals to as representing "early" usage, is the first theologian of note who uses

²²Text from R. J. S. Barrett-Lennard, *The Sacramentary of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Text for Students*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 25 (Bramcote: Grove Books 1993). Other prayers are cited from this source, with modification.

Romans 6:4 in a baptismal context, and did so consistently throughout his career in writings in Egypt and Caesarea!²³ Thus the use of such imagery in Egypt is at least mid-third century. There is, I would suggest, no objective reason for deciding that prayers 15 and 16 belong to a later pattern of ritual than prayers 7–11.

REVERSING THE MONOLINEAR DEVELOPMENT

The third hypothesis which Johnson has adopted is one which seems to be endemic to liturgists who study the early periods. If a chronological sequence of development can be posited, then any document can be peeled in onion fashion to yield an earlier core; history can be reversed. On the basis of the two previous hypotheses, and with a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” Johnson feels able confidently to do this with Sarapion. Thus prayers 15 and 16 can be isolated as later accretions, and prayers 7–11 give us the earlier pattern. Now, where there are parallel texts or a common document, such as the documents associated with the *Apostolic Tradition*, the exercise has some legitimacy in that each of the texts gives some control over the others. Even so, there is both guess work and subjective judgment involved. Where there is no such parallel, the exercise is almost futile. In this respect scholars of early liturgy often resemble the nineteenth-century quests for the “historical Jesus,” who, it was assumed, could be located under the layers of the Gospels. Here one is reminded of George Tyrrell’s comment on Harnack’s peeling away of dogma: “The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.”²⁴ In this case, Johnson has us peer into Sarapion’s font, but all we see are the reflections of Kretschmar, Bradshaw and Winkler staring back up at us.

Though a “hermeneutics of suspicion” may be justifiable in approaching liturgical documents, in the final analysis the liturgist has to treat his or her text without manipulation by too many hypotheses, and has to assess what it presents as positively as pos-

²³ Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1996) 201–3.

²⁴ G. Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, 1909, (London: Faber 1963) p. 49.

sible. What, therefore, can be said of Sarapion's prayers for the baptismal rites, and their place within Egyptian baptismal practice?

The presupposition in this reassessment is that in Egypt the evidence at present suggests that some groups, later to be classed as Gnostic, knew a pre-baptismal exorcism and a post-baptismal anointing with myron/chrisim. This may not have been the only pattern; perhaps Kretschmar and Bradshaw are correct, and the pattern of pre-baptismal anointing and baptism was also known. Beyond that, there is little concrete evidence on which to base any judgment since our first liturgical texts for Egypt are Sarapion's prayers and the *Canons of Hippolytus*, both dated to the mid-fourth century. Thus in the absence of other documentation, they are our prime and only documents. They give us a picture of baptismal rites in Thmuis and in one other Egyptian area. There are some similarities between the two baptismal liturgies which they presupposed, and a great many differences. How typical they were of the pattern elsewhere in earlier times, or elsewhere in Egypt at that time, we do not know.

With regard to the prayers of Sarapion, Cuming has given good reasons for the collection to be treated as authentic, and the onus is on those who think otherwise to show why. Johnson himself has established that we have at least four strata, and that it is indeed a collection. We may treat it, therefore, as the collection of prayers gathered by Sarapion for his liturgical needs. He gives no rubrics or directions, and so there is no hint of subtle imposition or any ulterior motive which these latter sometimes betray. It is simply a collection of prayers.

Johnson's stratum (1) is the largest, and contains the anaphora with its attribution to Sarapion. In the mid-fourth century it seems that the bishop was still free to author his own prayer, though following convention and custom.²⁵ In comparison with other Egyptian anaphoras and anaphoral fragments, Sarapion's prayer incorporates many Egyptian features, but he has also been able to put his own particular hallmark upon the prayer.²⁶ Given

²⁵ See A. Gelston, *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992) for an excellent discussion of this issue.

²⁶ See Bryan D. Spinks, "The Integrity of the Anaphora of Sarapion of Thmuis and Liturgical Methodology," forthcoming in *Journal of Theological Studies* 1998.

the literary relationship it has with other prayers in this group, there is good reason to suppose that many of these, if not all, were also composed by Sarapion. Some of these he may have re-worked, but there is no reason why a bishop who collected prayers, could not have authored his own, even if he was guided by earlier tradition. If this is logical, then prayers 7–11 could have been written by Sarapion himself. Given that prayers 15 and 16 relating to oil are not in the same group, and therefore seem to have been acquired by the bishop from elsewhere, then there is a good chance that they were in existence *before* his own composition of prayers 7–11

For the process of baptismal preparation and its ritual in Thmuis, Sarapion needed a prayer on behalf of the catechumens (21) and a prayer for their dismissal or blessing (28). He had acquired three prayers relating to the blessing of oil, two of which (15 and 16) were concerned with baptism. That concerned with the pre-baptismal anointing articulates the belief that the anointing is a (spiritual) healing and strength-making power, healing the candidate from “every mark of sin and lawlessness or satanic fault,” giving remission of sins, and recreating. Since Sarapion gives no rubrics, we do not know whether this would have been prayed at a separate time from the actual anointing, or just prior to it. Its concern for healing is not really exorcistic, whereas the diocese/area for which the *Canons of Hippolytus* were redacted, seems to have regarded its corresponding anointing as being exorcistic. Sarapion also needed a prayer for blessing chrism which was used after the baptism — a usage known in Egypt at least amongst some Gnostic groups from the third century, and perhaps before that. This prayer is concerned with giving “the sign of the impress of the saving cross” that the candidates may become partakers of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and made secure in the seal. There is an element of petition for protection in this prayer too. Again, we do not know what formula, if any, was used during the anointing in Thmuis.

In the section which may have come from Sarapion’s own hand, we have a blessing of the water. In comparison with earlier liturgical literature, it would seem that prayers for the oil were recorded before prayers for the water, and indeed, Sarapion’s prayer is one of our earliest such prayers. There was an act of re-

nunciation (9) and a prayer of reception (10), apparently just prior to the act of baptism. Finally Sarapion provided a prayer for the candidate(s) after the baptism, but whether this came before or after the anointing with chrism we do not know.

In these prayers there are two theological concerns which are worthy of further attention. First, Sarapion's concern with the Logos. Thus in the blessing of the water: ". . . King and Lord of everything and Maker of the whole world, who has freely granted salvation to all created nature through the descent of your only-begotten Jesus Christ, who redeemed the human race which was created by yourself through the coming of your ineffable Logos. Watch now from heaven and look upon these waters and fill them with Holy Spirit. Let your ineffable Logos be in them and transform their energy and prepare the waters, being filled with your grace to be productive And as your only begotten Logos came down upon the waters of the Jordan and rendered them holy, so now also let him come down on these waters and make them holy and spiritual. . . ." In prayer 8 the only-begotten Logos guides the candidate, and in prayer 10 the Logos leads him and stands by him. It is possible to find antecedents for concern with the Logos in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, though there is no need to look beyond Egypt.²⁷ Whether we take the writings of Philo of Alexandria, the Gnostic documents, or Clement of Alexandria, there is a great interest in the Logos. However, we do not even need to search for older Egyptian antecedents. The letters of Athanasius to Sarapion furnish sufficient evidence to show that the Logos and his relation to the Spirit was a topical theological issue, and in this respect Sarapion's prayers reflect the contemporary Athanasian theology.

In his first letter to Sarapion, Athanasius deplores those who divide the Spirit from the Logos because "the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Almighty, to whom an angel ministers, who is inseparable from the Godhead and might of the Logos."²⁸ There is a relationship of mutual indwelling: "When mention is made of the

²⁷ R. F. Taft, "From Logos to Spirit: On the Early History of the Epiclesis," in (eds.) A. Heinz and H. Rennings, *Gratias Agamus. Studien zum eucharistischen Hochgebet. Für Balthasar Fischer* (Freiburg: Herder 1992) 489-502.

²⁸ Letter 1:11, in reference to Zechariah 1:9 in C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth Press 1951) 89.

Father, there is included also his Logos, and the Spirit who is in the Son. If the Son is named, the Father is in the Son, and the Spirit is not outside the Logos."²⁹ According to Athanasius, the Father does all things through the Logos in the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit can be described as being "proper to the Logos."³⁰ On the subject of the incarnation Athanasius describes their dual role as follows: "So too when the Logos visited the holy Virgin Mary, the Spirit came to her with him, and the Logos in the Spirit moulded the body and conformed it to himself."³¹

Of particular interest are the roles which Athanasius assigns the Logos and Spirit in unction at baptism: "The Spirit is called unction and he is seal. For John writes: 'As for you, the unction which ye received of him abideth in you, and you need not that anyone teach you, but his unction' - his Spirit- 'teacheth you concerning all things.' In the prophet Isaiah it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me.' Paul says: 'In whom having also believed, ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.' But the creatures are by him sealed and anointed and instructed in all things. But if the Spirit is the unction and seal with which the Logos anoints and seals all things, what likeness or propriety could the unction and the seal have to the things that are anointed and sealed? Thus by this consideration also he could not belong to the 'all things.' The seal could not be from among the things that are sealed, nor the unction from among the things that are anointed; it pertains to the Logos who anoints and seals. For the unction has the fragrance and odour of him who anoints; and those who are anointed say, when they receive thereof: 'We are the fragrance of Christ.' The seal has the form of Christ who seals, and those who are sealed partake of it, being conformed to it;"³² In other words, the Logos and the Spirit are involved together. As Alvyn Pettersen notes, Athanasius' arguments for the Spirit's divinity required stressing the oneness of the Spirit and the Son, and not their distinctiveness.³³ Here, even if Sarapion is traditional, as Robert Taft argues, he is also *thoroughly contempo-*

²⁹ 1:14, in *ibid.*, 93-94.

³⁰ 1:27,28, in *ibid.*, 132-33; 135.

³¹ 1:31, in *ibid.*, 145.

³² 1:23, in *ibid.*, 123-4.

³³ Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (London: Mobrays 1995) 185.

rary in his concern for the Logos as reflected in the epiklesis of the Logos in the blessing of the water, and the anaphora.

The Logos/Spirit theology may also explain the other concern found in two of the baptismal prayers, and other prayers in the same stratum. In prayer 11 after the baptism, prayer is made that the candidate be rendered pure, and "appoint him a partner with your angelic powers in order that he may no longer be called flesh but spiritual." The same concern for purity is found in prayers 6 and 26, and with a petition to be associated with angelic being, in prayers 19, 24, and 27. Prayer 24 reads: "Lord God of the ages, God of the rational spirits, God of pure souls and of all who sincerely and in purity call upon you, you who are revealed in heaven and are known to those pure spirits, you who are praised in song on earth and dwell in the catholic Church, being ministered to by holy angels and pure souls, you who made also a living chorus out of heaven for glory and praise of the truth. Grant that this church may be a living and pure church; grant it to have divine powers and pure angelical ministers in order that it may be able to praise you in purity."

In the blessing over the water the Logos is asked to make the water holy and spiritual "in order that those being baptized may be no longer flesh and blood but spiritual and be able to worship you." Thus, there is a concern for purity, to be like angels, and to worship in a spiritual manner. How is this accomplished? Partly through baptism, according to prayer 7. However, according to the letters of Athanasius to Sarapion, it is because the Logos and the Spirit indwell Christians, divinizing them and making them spiritual.³⁴ In a discussion of the same subject, he can quote from Isaiah 45:14-15, with the words "they shall worship thee, because God is in thee."³⁵ This may well be the rationale behind the request in the anaphora, "we pray make us a living people. . . . Let the Lord Jesus and holy Spirit speak in us and let him praise you through us."

This assessment of Sarapion's baptismal material has rested on one hypothesis only, namely, that in the light of the article by

³⁴ Letters 1:24 in Shapland, 125-7;

³⁵ Letters 2/3:4, *ibid.*, 157-58.

Cuming, the collection of prayers bearing the name of Sarapion may be regarded as the work of the fourth-century bishop of Thmuis. Since apart from references in Gnostic texts, this is one of our two earliest substantial evidences of baptism in Egypt, there are no grounds for trying to find some hypothetical earlier form underneath its provisions, because we have no sound basis for such an attempt. It should be taken as firm evidence of what liturgical prayers a bishop in mid-fourth century Thmuis required for the rite of baptism there. We cannot infer from its contents as to how far it corresponded to rites elsewhere in Egypt. This reappraisal accords with the strictures of Bradshaw that, "To emphasize what is common and to ignore what is distinctive of individual churches — or worse still to force that evidence to fit some preconceived notion of a normative pattern — is seriously to distort our understanding of the variety of primitive Christian practice, and to lay a false foundation for the modern revision of initiation rites."³⁶

³⁶ Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 183–84.

Nathan Mitchell

The Amen Corner "Becoming Eucharist"

"To celebrate Sunday Eucharist the followers of Jesus risked their lives in some times and places. Such was the gathering, such was the praise of God given there, such was the need to assemble the Church and make the Eucharist! . . . What will it take to reclaim this day and its holiness? None of us knows that, but we know that we do not live without our Lord's Day and its assembly. The vigor of that assembly, its beauty and its liveliness, its quiet and its passion, are what I want to address in this letter."

These words occur early on in Cardinal Roger Mahony's pastoral letter *Gather Faithfully Together: A Guide for Sunday Mass*. They

Nathan Mitchell

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